

## About Dispersed Camping

Dispersed camping is the term used for camping in the National Forest outside of a designated campground. It means no services such as trash removal, tables, or toilets. Those involved in dispersed camping usually classify their camping in terms of how they get to their campsite. There are backpackers, OHV'ers, equestrians, bike campers, car campers and RV'ers. Dispersed camping offers everybody the opportunities of closeness to nature, a more primitive experience, solitude and acquiring other personal rewards.

### Restricted Use Areas:

As a general rule, dispersed camping is restricted from Recreation Areas of Plumas National Forest. However, some portions of a few Recreation Areas are open for backpacking. And some trails where dispersed camping is not available connect to the Pacific Crest Trail where backpacking is encouraged. The following recreation areas have access to backpacking. [Buck's Lake Recreation Area](#), and [Lakes Basin Recreation Area](#). (click on a link and scroll down to dispersed camping information for that Recreation Area)

### Locating a Dispersed Campsite:

Look for an area where you are not likely to damage any forest resources. Before settling on your spot, investigate the surroundings. Consider those you are camping with. For example, deep water and steep drop-offs may not be suitable locations for children. Continue looking for things in nature that pose less obvious dangers. You may regret camping next to a beehive, near a loose hanging dead branch or dust kicked up from a too busy forest road. Locations at the end of a spur road or a pullout that is clear of vegetation and has a hard, compacted surface are usually good spots. If driving, stay on established roadways; do not drive off-road to camp. Select a campsite at least 100 feet from lakes and streams. Never camp in meadows.

### Maps:

Anyone planning a dispersed camping trip should invest in a forest map. You not only have to locate a campsite; you will also have to find your way back. Plumas National Forest is interspersed with privately held land. Be respectful and know where you are. [Click Here](#) for a link to maps and map related information.

### Length of Stay:

On Plumas National Forest land, you may camp up to 14 days

### Campfires and Fire Permits:

During times of high fire danger, campfires are prohibited. Information about current forest campfire restrictions is available on the [Plumas National Forest](#) website and at all forest visitor centers.

A California Campfire Permit is required for all types of campfires including wood fires, barbecues, and gas cook stoves. This statewide permit is available online at [www.preventwildfiresCA.org](http://www.preventwildfiresCA.org) and at most Forest Service, BLM and CalFire visitor centers. Read and follow all instructions on your permit and have it readily available while camping. If building a fire ring was part of setting up your camp, before leaving make sure the coals are dead out by touching the coals and disperse any rocks used.

### Leave No Trace Ethics:

Every person recreating outdoors is encouraged to learn and practice the seven principles of Leave No Trace. The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics protects the outdoors by teaching and inspiring people to enjoy it responsibly. The Center accomplishes this mission by delivering cutting-edge education and research to millions of people every year. (The seven principles are listed under the "Why Leave no Trace?" tab of the linked website.)

### **Bear Awareness:**

You will be visiting the home of bears and other wildlife while dispersed camping. Bears are inquisitive and will investigate just about any opportunity to find food. Bears hunt by smell and by sight. Special care in setting up and maintaining your campsite is required. A bear that gained reward from a camp cooler will likely investigate any camp cooler encountered in the future that is left in sight. Bears acclimated to the presence of people will go through with that investigation despite the presence of people. The experience and acclimation levels of any wildlife depends upon visitors who came before you. Don't be that camper. It is illegal to feed any wildlife.

The Bear Awareness link provides specific information that will keep you, fellow campers and wildlife safe. Population demographics in California dictates that relocation of problem bears just gives a problem to another community. A fed bear is a dead bear. Report incidents with wildlife to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife by [CLICKING HERE](#).

### **Camp Sanitation:**

Camp sanitation refers to the proper handling and disposal of human waste, pet waste and trash while camping. Both the 'Leave No Trace' and the 'Bear Awareness' links provided above give needed information. The CDC link provided under the subject "Camp Sanitation" offers information on a variety of subjects. Pack out what you pack in. Dispose of trash at home. Do not use dumpsters at developed campgrounds and other recreation facilities. They are not for your use without paying that fee.

### **Water Safety:**

Free flowing water in Plumas National Forest is usually cool, clear and tasty. It however also includes the possibility of carrying any of a great number of biological hazards. Always treat natural occurring sources of water before consumption. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

### **Other Considerations:**

- Leave trip information with a friend or family member not going camping with you. Include the time you expect to be returning, where you expect to be, list who is with you and a description of your vehicle. Also include emergency contact information so your support person will know who to contact in the local camping area in cases of emergency or not returning as expected. The Forest Service plays a support role to the local sheriff's department in search and rescue activities. [Plumas County](#), [Butte County](#), [Sierra County](#), [Lassen County](#)
- Weather Conditions – Before starting on your trip check local weather. Lightning, wind and precipitation can take some of the enjoyment out of camping and includes some danger. Records show that deep snow has fallen in the Sierra Nevada in every month. Hypothermia is one of the biggest dangers to backpackers. It can strike on what seems to be a balmy summer day. Use the [National Weather Service](#) website for weather forecasts in your camping area.
- Plan for small scrapes while camping with a first aid kit. Inexpensive kits are available at many stores. Remember sunscreen and insect repellent. You may encounter poison oak in many parts of the forest. Bees, ticks and rattlesnakes also live here. Stay away from rodents and buildings. Hantavirus and Plague have been detected in some areas.
- People may be driving many miles before reaching their campsite. Plan for the possibility of getting lost by topping off you gas tank before getting there. Walking or hitching out won't be a pleasant experience.
- Planning for the unexpected includes bringing along some extra food and water. A number of situations may bring a need for it.
- Depending upon your mode of transportation, plan to bring those creature comforts that make life just a bit more comfortable. Decide what is important to you when planning. For example, a camp chair is usually better than sitting on the ground.
- Come with a can-do positive attitude and patience backed by great planning. You and fellow campers will have a wonderful rewarding experience outdoors in Plumas National Forest.